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Opening speech: 2nd International Conference of Scholarly Journals Editors-in-Chief (Islamic Countries)

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Ladies and Gentlemen

Good morning

At the outset of my speech, I'd like to personally welcome all the respected attendees, from our home country Iran and abroad, respected invitees from ISESCO and the Ministry of Science, Research and Technology, researchers and scientists from Iranian universities, editor-in-chiefs of ISC-indexed journals from Iran and the regional countries, my colleagues from ISC and RICEST and all those who participated in one way or another to make this unique event come true. I firmly believe that bringing inspired people together in a forum like this would ensure that ISC always remains at the cutting edge.

Before I commence I tend to name those humble people for whose association and help we here at ISC are so proud as well as grateful. To me, such public thank you is a veiled declaration of intimacy with those who have been in a position to lend assistance to ISC since its establishment in 2008.

First, my sincerest thanks go to H. E. Dr. Othman Altwijiri, Director General of ISESCO for the key role His Excellency played in the establishment of the Islamic World Science Citation Center (ISC).

Second, I am much indebted to Dr. Faiq Bilal, Director of Science Directorate of ISESCO, for his contribution to the holding of this conference.

Third, my appreciations Vahid Ahmadi, the MSRT's Vice-Minister for Research and Technology, for full support of ISC and its programs.

Also, I am appreciative of the helps we received from Dr. Salar Amoli for producing Visa for our respected guests from the OIC countries.

Finally, I thank my colleagues at the ISC and RICEST, the editor-in-chiefs of ISC-indexed journals, researchers and colleagues from Iranian universities and all the attendees without whose presence this whole program could be nothing but a fail.

The idea of founding a citation center to assess research performance of OIC countries' research output was first conceived in the third Islamic Conference of Ministers of Higher Education and Scientific Research, held in Kuwait City, State of Kuwait, between November 19-21, 2006. There, the delegate from the Islamic Republic of Iran took the

initiative and put forward the idea of founding such a center to assess OIC countries research performance. This idea was welcomed by all members of ISESCO and was hence included in the agenda.

The proposal was worked on successfully and put on the table during the fourth Islamic Conference of Ministers of Higher Education and Scientific Research, held in Baku, Capital of the Republic of Azerbaijan, in October, 2008. During that meeting, the proposal was discussed and verified with absolute majority and the I. R. of Iran was bestowed with the responsibility to establish such a citation center. And that is in brief how ISC was established in Shiraz, south of Iran.

ISC seeks to assess research performance of OIC countries. Great strides have been made by the directing body of ISC to provide the infrastructure required for the successful fulfillment of this objective.

I am obliged here to avow here that ISC's achievements during its short life have been phenomenal, in need, owing to the constant help and support received from Iran's Ministry of Science, Research and Technology as well as Iran's High Council for Cultural Revolution. These two supporting bodies guaranteed ISC's accomplishments by adopting scientific, administrative and financial policies required.

Assessment of research performance is a complicated phenomenon involving an array of variables and indicators. In general, citation systems – like ISI, Scopus and ISC - undertake various types of assessments and rankings through a number of indicators including researchers, scientific journals, subject fields, universities, research institutions and countries. Currently, ISC ranks third, after ISI (from Thomson Reuters with a history of more than half a century) and Scopus (in the Netherlands, with a history of about two decades) in the whole world. Both ISI and Scopus are well known citation systems embodying a number of interesting products and services of which the scientific community can avail it. Despite these advantages, they fail to cover local languages and concentrate only on English resources. In contrast, ISC, despite its short history, has endeavored to cover languages other than English as well. The long term objective has of course been to cover all national languages in OIC has been produced such that it can be expanded, on demand to cover OIC languages. No doubt, this is time-taking process due to the linguistic difficulties embedded in such practices. This difficulty is well justifiable when we observe that even global ranking systems like ISI and SCOPUS have avoided local languages despite the long time and better resources they have had for development.

I would like to announce here that ISC currently processes journals in three languages, i.e. Persian, Arabic and English and seeks to cover French shortly since it is used in a number of OIC countries. This is a non-stop process and having covered French we will seek to include other languages from the OIC region.

Having OIC region as its scope has not acted of course as a restriction for the realm of our activities. Interestingly, we have been receiving requests from non-OIC countries (including America, England, Finland, Poland, Russia, India, ...) as well to have their journals indexed in ISC. So, the regional ISC has now upgraded into a global ranking

system ranking universities, journals, etc. from all over the world.

To date, 1117 Arabic journals, 1056 English ones and 403 journals from other languages are indexed in ISC. The number of Iranian journals indexed in ISC is also remarkable – 1046 journals affiliated to the Ministry of Science, Research and Technology, 331 journals from the Ministry of Health, Treatment and Medical Training, and 250 journals affiliated to the Islamic Azad University.

This simply means that ISC currently indexes more than 4000 journal titles from Iran, OIC and of course non-OIC countries. Of course, this sum is a fraction of the whole journals available in the international scientific community, and hence not that bulky in its present status, nevertheless it provides good ground for implementation of various types of scientometrics analyses and will provide more information as we move on.

It is axiomatic that development of citation systems is time taking process. By this I am not focusing on issues like budget, building, etc. since such requirements have always been provided to ISC by the Iranian government with ease and on demand. Rather, I would like to focus on the time required to develop the software needed and of course the need for man power who have a good grip on scientometrics analysis.

Regarding ISC's software, it has been developed by our own staff here. We consistently improve and enrich it by adding new features and new products. Regarding the staff, the M.S. program for Scientometrics was commenced at RICEST last year. Currently 12 students are studying in this program and this trend will be continued to train the man power required to fill-in-the-gap between ISC and ISI (and Scopus) in the shortest time possible.

An important scheme here at ISC is to open up its branches in ISESCO member states to accelerate the enlargement of ISC database. This will, of course, require training of expertise in Scientometrics for which I am honored to introduce our M.S. program for Scientometrics. This program, in the long run, intends to train staff from the OIC countries to represent ISC branches in their relevant countries. I invite here the respected participants from the OIC countries to assist by introducing to us, through their universities, interested students who wish to attend the program.

An important point I wish to share here on the present conference is that not many journals from OIC countries are indexed in ISI and Scopus. From among those which are indexed, journals with an IF from only a minority. Since the establishment of ISC, citation analysis has come under focus not only in Iran but also in OIC countries. Journal seek to publish original research with the objective to promote the status of science in the society, to increase scientific and research collaboration among research and scientific institutions in Iran and the OIC countries and expand knowledge frontiers. Attaining this objective depends greatly upon the scientific and research infrastructure of each member state.

As specified in its charter, ISC has been bestowed with the responsibility to hold workshops and seminars to improve the status of ICS-indexed journals and, of course, facilitate journal submission by interested bodies to ISC. The present conference is indeed the second of this type- the first one was held two years back- which is being held for

editor-in chiefs of scientific journals from Iran and the OIC region.

The respected editor-in-chiefs here are invited to make the best use of the potential available in universities, research institution and societies to enhance the status of their journals. To enhance the quality of journals, a number of steps need to be taken:

The editor-in-chiefs as well as the editorial boards of scientific journals should be picked up from among outstanding scientific figures. These people are those whose effort cans most contribute to the enhancement of scientific journals.

Another point of great moment in enhancing the status of academic journals goes back to the nature of the peer-review process. Qualified and experienced referees can guarantee the quality of articles – and their originality as well.

Yet another important issue pertains to the referencing mechanism used in journals. Studies undertaken on the referencing issue reveal that journals quite often do not follow in-text and out-text citation standards. Inconsistencies are observed among journals, even between different issues of a given journal and even at times between different articles of a single journal issue. To ease indexing in ISC, journals need to abide by citation standards. Mismatch in out-text citation may not cause any problem in information databases but they can be a big problem in citation systems like ISC. Hence, it is highly recommended that ISC-indexed journals move towards adapting sort of citation standards.

One further point contributing to the quality of journals goes back to the issue of author affiliations. In general, author affiliation is drawn on in a number of research areas including ranking of universities and research institutions, production of science maps, assessing research quality, ranking authors, departments, etc.

During the past few years, the increase in the volume of journals has been astronomical. We witness that journal editors are showing ever increasing tendency towards e-publishing. The reasons for such tendency are two-fold: First, journals try to keep abreast of the recent trend in publishing namely the open access movement. Second, journals are faced with budgeting problems and such constraints have forced them to adopt e-publishing as a substitute policy. E-publishing is today deemed as a routine in many countries of the world especially emerging scientific countries.

Today, electronic copies of a large number of scientific journals are freely accessible. E-publishing is easier, faster and requires less budgeting. An inherent advantage of e-publishing is that it provides the grounds needed for crawlers to retrieve journals and to use the data for indexing purposes. For e-publishing to perform maximally, there is of course a need for an online journal submission system by the use of which journals can receive articles, send them for peer-review and also form their own online archives for later reference and use.

Plagiarism is also deemed as an important issue in the scientific community today as it has been for so long. This phenomenon can harm the quality and status of journals. Indexing systems are apt to exclude journals from their systems due to plagiarism traces observed in them. Thus, it is a must for editor-in-chiefs of journals to be familiar with plagiarism, plagiarism detecting software and the strategies needed to avoid or at least

minimize this problem in scientific production process thereby guarantee the copyright issue.

Before closing my speech, I would like to make some proposals:

1- To establish a publishing agency, with international scope, to publish scientific and research journals from the OIC countries. This will facilitate their indexing in ISC substantially and will be a great help to journals financially.

2- To establish ISC local branches in different OIC countries.

3- To encourage consistent interaction between ISC and journals with the aim of enhancing the quality and status of ISC-indexed journals.

4- To schedule regular visits to ISC (for ISC-indexed editor-in-chiefs) and to OIC countries (for ISC directing body or staff to mark the problems and to make proposals for their removal).

5- To hold ISC's conferences in OIC countries. ISC will help financially to hold such conferences.

6- To use ISC for citation analyses, science mapping and scientific and research performance assessments in the OIC countries.

7- To hold workshops at national and international levels to publicize research and scientific potential of the OIC countries, especially their universities and research institutions.

Thank You